1: Tew . E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Kangombe, used to persuade Nyanja to help in the sacrificial rite. When Kapoai in turn fled to Mount Soche from the Ngoni, and died there, the Yao addressed their offerings to him, not to Kangombe.[1] The word *Mulungu* has sometimes been interpreted to mean Supreme Being, God, Creator, but among the Yao it seems not to have a personal connotation. It was used to describe the agent in any mysterious event,[2] or the place where the ancestor spirits (*mazuka*) were supposed to dwell. Daily life was full of acts of respect towards the ancestors, who were regarded as jealous of the living, and requiring constant propitiation.[3]

Sorcery

Accusations of witchcraft and measures for dealing with it play a dominant role in Yao social life. With certain exceptions nearly all diseases and deaths are thought to be caused by sorcery. The exceptional causes are: the hand of God, old age, the transgression of certain taboos, and battle wounds. If sorcery is suspected the relatives of the sick or dead man consult the diviner to identify the offender.

Yao (in common with the Maravi and many peoples of Central Africa) believe that sorcerers have a craving for human flesh, which they satisfy by killing with magic the victims of their malice and hatred. They acquire their magical powers by an apprenticeship, which might include incestuous relations with mother, sister, or mother-in-law, or sleeping on the grave of the mother for one night. The sorcerer then learns the medicines and finally demonstrates his power by killing a young relative by magic; he waits till the victim is buried, and then magically exhumes him for the secret feast with his fellow sorcerers. Each sorcerer who shares the flesh owes a debt to the one who secured the victim.

Charms are used as preventive measures against sorcery. When a diviner has diagnosed the cause of death as sorcery, retaliatory measures are taken. The headmen of the village could either call in the witchfinder to identify the offender or he could call in the diviner to take action against all the sorcerers in the village. After the diviner, *Mabinalila*, had revealed the guilty ones, they were challenged to take the poison ordeal to prove their innocence. If they died, the proof and the punishment were simultaneously accomplished. If they survived, the diviner was held to have been at fault and they were acquitted. The witch doctor was supposed to entice sorcerers to the graveside, and slay them with magic more powerful than their own.

The diviner's findings are to-day checked by the poison ordeal administered to a chicken. A sorcerer detected in this way might be asked to provide medicine for the man whose sickness he had caused, or after a death he might be compelled to pay compensation. If the accused is a village headman, he will not be summoned before a chief, but his brother will take the villagers away from the sphere of his influence, or he may be chased away from the district. Accusations of sorcery follow certain regular lines. Nearly all accusations fall on relatives. Diviners are consulted by matrilineal relatives of the sick or dead person, and the man most usually accused is the brother of the accuser, or the husband of his sister. Witchcraft is therefore a manner of expressing the hostilities latent in these relations, which are, in the Yao social system, full of tension.

[1] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 70.
[2] Hetherwick, p. 190.
[3] Hetherwick, p. 190.
[4] Hoebel, 1933, pp. 14-15; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 58-59, 614-15.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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•751
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Frontispiece

PLATE I

CHIEF KAWINGA THE SIXTH

He wears the traditional necklace of lions' claws which are medicined to protect him from the bullets of his enemies.

[facing p. iii]

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

Further enquiries may reveal that this is only a section of a larger village, possibly a hundred or more yards away.

The boundaries of a village may not always be clear. Clusters of huts which are part of one village may be physically nearer another, but in the minds of the Yao, who see not only the huts but also the social relationships of the people occupying them, there is no confusion at all. As a general rule the villages are fairly compact and clearly demarcated from others, and even strangers have no difficulty in recognizing the autonomy of the group which is expressed in many different ways. MacDonald recorded that formerly a headman performed a certain amount of ritual which symbolized the unity of the village.[1] Much of this has fallen away, but the unity remains.

The ritual surrounding the foundation of a new village bears testimony to its persisting political significance. In this ritual the unity of the group, against other similar groups, including the village from which it has sprung, is expressed. On first arrival at a new village site the men build grass sheds, beginning with that of the headman. That night the headman pours a cone of sacred flour at the root of a tree on the site, and asks the spirits of his ancestors whether the site is propitious. Early next morning he examines the cone to see the answer. If a side of the cone has collapsed it does not augur well and another site is selected. If the cone is still whole it is taken that the spirits acquiesce, and permanent huts can be started. The headman then goes into the bush to find medicines[2] which he mixes with groundbeans. That night, with the medicated groundbeans in the hut, the headman has intercourse with his wife. In the morning those who are not sexually active come to the headman's grass shed to drink some water in which the medicine has been steeped and eat some of the medicated beans with a little porridge, which the headman's wife has prepared from the sacred flour. This medicine is called 'the medicine to strengthen the village' (*mtera wakulimbika mzi*). Until then all members of the village should have been continent but after this sexual relationships may be resumed. The object of the medicine is to prevent those

[1] See pp. 33-6.

[2] *Mkulungwa* and *ukuta*, two plants commonly used for protection against *ndoka*. See Ln., p. 112.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

who are sexually inactive from contracting *ndaka*.[1] At the same time the headman gives each household a piece of the fire which has been newly kindled in the traditional way by rubbing two sticks together.

The mystical danger inherent in the act of setting up a new village is well brought out in the propitiatory prayer and the abstinence from sexual intercourse. Once again it is the village headman who must make the offering to his ancestors; and it is the village headman who has intercourse with his wife so that the effluvium from his sexual activity may permeate the medicine in the hut and so protect the villagers from *ndaka*. Lastly, it is very important that the whole village cooks and is warmed by one fire. 'We are of one fire' expresses the common origin of two villages; though in fact every time a new village is founded a new fire should be kindled. To bring fire from the village of origin is to bring sorcery, since the Yao believe that sorcery can operate between persons closely linked by kinship only. To have one's own fire is to be autonomous from other groups.

The Burdens and Rewards of Headmanship

MacDonald had the perspicuity to see not only that the village headman was the representative of a corporate group and that he represented this group to outsiders, but also that he represented external authority to his villagers. The village headman who in his person stood for the unity of the group, *performed* certain ritual acts which emphasized this, such as praying to the village ancestors. In spite of the decline of the ritual his position is still regarded as exceptional. Much, however, depends on the rank of the village headman. There may not be much difference in ritual observances and mystical dangers between a headman who has in his charge a meagre three or four huts, and a commoner. In the larger and more important

[1] This is one of the most important mystical concepts of the Yao. I have described this condition and its implications more fully in *Marriage among the Machinga Yao of Southern Nyasaland* (R.-L.I. Paper), forthcoming. Briefly it is a disease characterized by oedema which affects those who are sexually inactive when they are suddenly brought into contact with a person, or an object which he has touched, after having intercourse. The people most affected are the young and the old, i.e. those who cannot have sexual intercourse. Those who are capable of intercourse are expected to have ritual intercourse with a stranger, and so fortify themselves against this dread disease.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

622 neglect neither his sorority-group nor the husbands in his village,[1] that his sorority-group and his village were his garden and he must take care of the young plants in it. The husbands were the watchmen who look after the women in the village. A headman dare not take sides or be unfair, nor must he talk behind people's backs. He must take care to settle differences amicably by discussion at meetings. They advised him not to pay too much attention to his wives who may have quarrelled with his sisters and tell him that they have been insulting him. When he hears a report like that he may be unfair to his sisters and people will say that he has broken his village through listening to nonsense. This sort of instruction went on through the night.

On Friday when the beer was brewed, Mlamba and Mbalwe, both headmen and perpetual sons of Nyambi, came to the village [344] and told the men to build a small grass shed for the successor to sit in. This the men did, and the women were told to plaster it and clean the huts out for the strangers who would be coming to the ceremony. On Saturday morning before cockcrow, Makoka and Ncimba got up and told the women to cook a big pot of porridge because they were taking Cimombo to bathe and when they returned they would want to find porridge ready. [415] Makoka took some medicine called *mkulumo* in a bark container (*likungwa*) into the toilet enclosure. He put the medicine into • [751] two jars of water and told Cimombo to wash himself in it daily as he was an important headman, and it would strengthen his body.[2] After Cimombo had washed he went back into the hut 622 where a mat was spread on the floor and on it were a dish of 266 porridge and three dishes of relish. Makoka and Ncimbo told him to take a little porridge, dip it into one of the relishes—whichever he chose—and eat it. Cimombo did so. They did not tell him that one of the dishes contained human flesh.[3] When he tried the dish of human flesh he vomited and all the villagers cried with joy, saying that he was a good chief because he had

[1] *Mbumba jao ni akamwini wao*—the meaning and significance of this in the village context is explained on p. 183.

[2] This is a euphemism for protective medicine against sorcery.

[3] The immediate question is: Where did the human flesh come from? No informant could tell me and I am inclined to believe that one of the dishes is 'ritually' made into human flesh for this ceremony. This special ceremony was always spoken about as if it were secret, especially from White people.

in turn. After drinking, they sit down while the *n'mishila* gives instructions that here they sleep tonight. He takes his basket and starts to run back to *Lupanda*, singing:

"*Ku*	*ñanjile*	*pilolejo*	*nikumbeje*	*kukwejiro*	*ku Munde!*"
"Where	we went to		masters		to *Munde!*"

Then going to the back of his hut, he enters and takes a piece of bark left there lent up into a dish containing medicine which has been put in by an assistant. This assistant holds in his hand the neck of one of the fowls which was killed at *Lupanda*. The *n'mishila* washes his face and chest with medicine to cleanse his eyes and then leans forward to the assistant and bites a piece off the neck of the fowl which the assistant holds out, and eats it. This is *ku-lumiva*, "to taste a small piece," often the liver, before starting to eat the flesh; this is generally done by the most important person. The *n'mishila* has been followed by his assistants who do as he has done. They all follow him next round the cooking place for the boys at *Lupanda*, each standing for a moment on the stones which have supported the cooking pots, while the women sit looking on sadly. He begins to dance and the women join in, singing *likwata*. He then calls the parents of the *wali* and leads them to where the bonfire was. There assembled, he tells them they must not bathe, and that tomorrow morning early, porridge is to be sent to the *wali* which must be prepared by a woman who has had connection with her husband and who has not washed her hands; this is supposed to make the boys strong. Early in the morning, the husband, who likewise has not washed his hands, carries the food to the *wali* and personally gives portions to each boy to eat.

When they have partaken of the food, the circumcision is performed by the *n'mishila* who has returned the same morning early. The *wali* one by one, commencing with the leader, go forward a little to the place where the *n'mishila* awaits them. Each *mwali* is accompanied by his *nkamwai* who commonly says, "Come along and you shall eat of the honey made by the bumblebee." Such honey is very sweet and called *mawa*. This refers in sarcastic terms to the pain the boy is about to undergo. The boy squats down, leaning back on his *nkamwai* who supports him, while the medicine-man, having warned the lad not to cry out, performs the circumcision with a small knife called *chiwanda*. It is a triangular knife with one cutting edge and a handle produced from the opposite corner. Properly the Yao method is, I believe, only to nick the free margin of the prepuce just to the right of the middle line near the frenum, but complete circumcision is now commonly practised, possibly as the result of Swahili influence. In this case, the prepuce is seized and held by the fingers, and division made by a circular incision without using a clamp or forked stick. A dressing of charcoal and oil may be applied or medicine is chewed in the mouth and the saliva spat on the wound and the boy sent on to rest under some convenient tree.

When all the *wali* have been circumcised, they are gathered together in one place and the *n'mishila* dividing them into groups, puts on the neck of the leader of each group a necklace made of plaited bark from the *mpindo* tree;[1] these necklaces contain medicine against all evils - witchcraft, disease, lions, etc.

3: Stanaus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

843 538 when in child-birth there is delay in delivery it is said of the woman "*Akulabwa*," "she is stuck," from *ku-kulabwa* "to be suspended, to be caught by a thorn"; *wajaja*, well dressed, is a slang exclamation meaning "everything, everything is out!" The verse refers, of course, as all obstetricians will recognize, to the moment of crowning of the oncoming head during parturition when it appears to be stuck; then suddenly it slips over the perineum and "everything, everything is out."

843 533 The nakenge now gives way to the songs of the other women. In different districts different versions of the songs are sung, but the other women will quickly pick up the refrain of the song sung by a woman who has come in from some distance.

843 After these songs, the nakenge instructs the woman and her husband in the care they must take until after the child is born. Macdonald says, speaking of the instructions "but of the quality, we prefer to be silent."[1] What a pity he allows no one else to judge!

The woman is especially cautioned against sitting with her legs crossed; they must be kept apart lest the child in her womb be suffocated. She is also told many useful things concerning her pregnancy and confinement. The husband is cautioned to cease intercourse with his wife or if he has intercourse, his wife may not lie on her back, lest the child be injured.

While this instruction is going on, all the assembled women cook and eat the feast which has been made for them. When all has been said, the nakenge anoints the man with castor oil, which has in the meantime been warmed, and ties round the neck of the woman the *litiwo*, a cord made of plaited bark-cloth with a tassel in front; at the base of the tassel white beads are strung for good luck, and at the end of the tassel, red beads are affixed, having symbolic reference to the haemorrhage at the time of childbirth. The woman wears only a strip of calico of two hands breadth called *mlete*. She is anointed on the head, body, and limbs.

[1151] The tying of the *litiwo* is the sign for dancing to begin. It is a dance in which women try to excel one another. They come with all their tattoo marks on buttocks, thighs, and abdomen renovated; they wear diaper-fashion a narrow strip of cloth, always black in color, and round their bodies numerous strings of beads. With the beginning of the dancing, their other clothes are thrown off and practically naked, they vie with one other in exhibiting their charms and skill in dancing, which afterwards becomes the subject of much discussion among the women onlookers. "So and so is really too old and skinny for such exhibition," and "So and so has buttocks as flat as a wall," while "Such and such a one is fat and beautiful and dances wonderfully, with such stamina," etc. In front of the woman

[431] is set a wooden plate, in front of the man a mat, and on these are thrown donations by the dancers and onlookers, consisting of beads etc., or nowadays pennies and small silver coins to help to pay the expenses of the entertainment and, in the woman's case, to buy medicine which may be necessary should the baby fall ill. When the wedded couple are

[1] Africana, op. cit., vol. I, p. 158.

Simple incision is practised for relief of pain or again "medicine" may be introduced into the wound. Such medicine usually consists of charcoal prepared from various vegetable substances. There is no evidence that any active medicinal principles are involved and the most that is attained is probably a certain amount of counter-irritation. For pain, a string is tied tightly round the part; thus for headache one sees a string tied round the head and doubtless some relief is felt when pressure is made on the temples. A man with an abscess of the hand or foot will tie a string round the arm or leg, but I have never seen it so applied as to produce any effect comparable to that of Bier's hyperaemic treatment. By analogy a string may be worn round the chest for pleuritic pain and by limiting movement may be effective. In many cases a charm is attached to the string as an adjuvant.

The use of drugs as such is widespread but I have very little evidence of their efficacy. The methods of administration are various. The vapor bath is often used. Over a pot of water in which have been dropped herbs and stones heated in a fire, the patient squats enveloped in a blanket and is thereby subjected to the action of the medicated steam. This method is also adopted for enemiem. A case which came recently to my notice was the wife of a native hospital dresser who, suffering pain in the abdomen, avoided my ministrations and consulted a female medicine-maker. She was given a vapor bath as above described and after a few moments, the medicine-woman slapped her on the back and told her to rise. The old woman plunged her hands into the pot and brought forth some human hair tied in a piece of cotton and a human metacarpal bone. "These are what troubled you," she said — fee £1! This is called *ku-lapisia*, to take evil things out for.

Various powdered barks and leaves are applied to ulcers and appear to have an astringent effect in some cases but the majority seem to go from bad to worse. No other external applications have been observed except one for scabies. Incision of the skin and insertion of "medicine" have been mentioned above.

Large numbers of vegetable products are administered by mouth, always in the form of an infusion or suspension. It is probable that a number of these are really beneficial but I am not able to speak in detail of their effects. Many astringents are undoubtedly used for diarrhoea. Herbs containing oil are used for gonorrhoea.

Apart from magic medicine dealt with elsewhere and commonly employed for purposes outside disease, charms are used for the prevention and treatment of ordinary diseases and injuries. There are only a few varieties of charms. A vegetable substance, root or stem, may be worn on a string round the part of the body concerned. Thus one sees a couple of little pieces of stick, *mbiji*, on a string tied round the head, round the arm or round the chest for headache, a whitlow or diarrhoea as the case may be. The medicine may be in the form of a preparation, generally charred vegetable substances, and is made into a little packet in leaves and cloth worn most commonly round the neck; it is called *kaleswa*. Such a charm is supposed to be effective against all ills.

3:Stanmus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Again, charm medicine may be contained in various articles which are also generally worn round the neck. The teeth and claws of the beasts of prey are so employed, generally arranged in pairs bound together so as to form a crescent and suspended from a string. The teeth of crocodiles, lions, leopards, and the claws of the same beasts and of some large birds of prey are thus employed. The teeth etc., are in themselves charms against injury, probably against what one might call homologous injury. The idea of stuffing them with medicine is probably a secondary consideration, a process of fortification of the charm so that its use comes to have a more powerful influence. It is interesting to see of late years that the native, recognising the decorative value of these crescent-shaped amulets, has begun to copy them in lead and ivory. A series of these of graduated size is worn as a necklace by women.

When a medicine-man is consulted, part payment is made in advance, "payment to go and dig medicine (roots)." The rest of the payment is made when the cure is effected. Should a patient not be satisfied with his treatment and wish to consult some other medicine-man, he pays to the first a quarter of the fee he would have paid if his cure had been effected; this is called "paying him to get his medicine away." Unless this is done, should he recover later, he will be liable to claims for full fees from all of the medicine-men he has consulted; each will say his own medicine has gone on acting and has effected the cure. A medicine-man may take a case he is treating into his own house.

In prescribing medicine, very particular instructions are given with an embargo on certain things which may or may not have some use and significance. A medicine-man in 1901 at Malemya's, who inoculated every one in the forehead with bullet proof medicine, said that no one must step across a *mutai* (pestle for pounding grain), and no one must eat the leaves of the sweet potato.

A medicine-man always partakes of part of the decoction he is giving to a patient to show that it is harmless; I think these preparations are mostly inactive. I should hate to sample all the castor oil I have prescribed, though many natives have had suspicions about me when I have not done so.

Poisons. Though there are a large number of species in this country, both vegetable and animal, from which poison might be extracted, those that have gained any reputation among natives and have come under my observation are but few in number. *Mwai* (*M'mbwi* Chin.) "the ordeal poison," is the bark of *Erythrophloeum guineense*. The natives distinguish two varieties of *mwai*, the two trees differing slightly in leaf, flower and bark; *mwai* in the *Erythrophloeum guineense*, the second variety known as *mpanyajilo* is doubtless an allied species. *Mwai* is the poison employed in the poison ordeal.[1] It is administered in a poisonous dose as a decoction of the bark, recovery or otherwise depending on whether or not the poison is vomited by vomiting. Natives give as the symptoms headache, giddiness, disturbances of vision, vomiting and purging, with slowing of heart beat. Appe-

[1] Vide infra, p. 296.

3:Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

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60. *Gonera kwako ndakuti!*
Lying on the rock, hunt!

This is a slang expression which in full would read, "It is nice and warm lying on a rock in the sun, but it is not so comfortable as being in bed in company with your wife; you can go on waiting but you won't get anything." This might even be said to a dog, watching as a dog will, every morsel of food lifted to its master's mouth.

61. *Kulupikila mosi pa mkina!*
To have hopes of water for maggots!

It is a custom before lying down to sleep on the floor mat, to take it up and pour boiling water on the earth floor to kill any blood-sucking maggots (Congo floor-maggot, *Ambomyrrophis*). If you see a pot cooking on the fire, you naturally think there is food being prepared but you may be disappointed; it may only be the pot for heating the water to kill the maggots. The saying is thus used to a man who has made an assignation and is disappointed but goes on waiting. [513] [751]

62. *Kalama upwi!*
To bite cockroach-like!

The cockroach is described by natives as going up to what it will eat, remaining quiet for some moments, and then suddenly taking a bite. This is said of a man who comes up to you smiling and then hits you a hard blow. [825]

Among the Yao as among other tribes that I have previously mentioned,[1] signs of salutation to a superior are made by clapping the hands or patting the breast or buttock with one hand, at the same time crouching down. A woman will go off the path and kneel, looking away from a superior passing along the roadway. 576

A person going by the door of a hut where others are sitting, will say "*Kwatuwa hano!* At the door here." Passing behind anyone, he will say "*Kwapa 'nsi!* At the back!" Meeting anyone on a path, a man will simply say, "*Ichi*, here," adding perhaps, "*Kwakuti!* all is well!" A *chief* or headman on returning to his village after a journey, is greeted by the women with trilling of the tongue (*Kwalulula*). [201]

Man and wife do not greet each other in the morning. The wife rises first and draws water and places it in the hut for the husband's use but nothing may be said.

When a visitor is entertained and a chicken cooked for a repast, the "pope's nose" is always for the visitor. The right hand only is used in dipping into the common pot. A man of small importance, though replete, will go on making pretence of eating at a common meal by taking very small amounts so that his superior shall finish first, and rise and go away before him.

I may here add the words used by the Yao for the sounds made by various animals; 182.
they are interesting to compare with those of other languages:

[1] "Notes on some tribes of British Central Africa," op. cit., p. 300-308.

7: Hetherwick M-S (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

evidence. On the appointed day she dances, *kupina mwambo*, to dance the spirits, or *kuwawula*, to rave or prophesy, and in the ravings of the dance she calls out the name of some party who is afterwards accused of being the *mwavi* or witch. Followed by a crowd of excited spectators she dances through the village spear in hand, stopping here and there to dig up charms or medicines which the supposed witch has buried in the ground as the instruments of his occult practices. It is only in cases of supposed special difficulty, or when the magnitude of the supposed crimes demands that special measures be adopted for their detection, that the services of such a witch detective are called in. In ordinary cases these appeals are made to the divining oracle who consults his "lota" as a means of discovering crimes of this nature.

Among the Yaos the human being is believed to be the sole possessor of a *lindo*. I have been unable to discover any trace of a theory that the *lindo* may pass into any animal or inanimate object and thus confer upon it the nature or power of a fetish. Such belief is cherished among the Angoni and Ankoya tribes to the westward by Nyasa and the upper Shire River, and the intelligent Yao is aware of this, but he states that among his people no such belief exists. Even charms which have the effect of healing or warding off disease, or of protecting the wearer from war or wild beasts or other danger by land or water, are supposed to possess this power without any idea of their being possessed by a *lindo* or other spirit influence. The nearest approach to such a theory is in the case of certain powerful "doctors" who have obtained special medicine by means of which, at death, they can transform themselves into lions, leopards, crocodiles, etc. Experts also are sometimes supposed to become hippopotami. But both of these cases must be regarded rather as transmutations of body than transmigrations of soul.

It will be thus seen that the nature of the human *lindo* is closely allied to that of the *mwambo*, which are the inspiring spirits in madness and in the ecstasy of prophecy or incantation. What the origin of these inspiring *mwambo* is, or to whom they belonged when in bodily life, the Yao holds no theory. He is content to accept them as they are, *mwambo ipepe*, "Just *mwambo* and nothing more," as he says.

It is, however, when we follow the disembodied *lindo* after death and consider its position and power in the other world that we find ourselves in a region of higher spiritual activities.

In dreams or in fainting fits the *lindo* leaves the body but only to return to it with the awakening consciousness. At death, however, it leaves its earthly abode never to return. It is now spoken of as having gone to *malonga* or *mlonga*. This word, which lies at the basis of all Yao theories of the place of the soul after death, will be dealt with later on as regards its derivation and connections in the Bantu family of languages. In its actual use it bears two significations.

1. The word *malonga* is in the first instance applied to the human soul or *lindo* after death when it is considered as an inhabitant of the spirit world. Even in life a man, when he meets with any piece of good luck, will be heard to say, "It's my *malonga*," as if his soul had an influence in determining the character of his

10: Sanderson D-5 (ca. 1920)1922 FT? Yao FT?

A Note on Ceremonial Purification among the WaYao, Nyasaland. 55

By *Meredith Sanderson, M.R.C.S., F.R.G.S.*

One of the effects of European influence in Africa is the breaking up of tribal organization and discipline. The rights of the individual being no longer subordinated to the common good, customs formerly observed by the village community as a whole die out, while those affecting the individual are still practised.

This tendency is well seen in the ancient ceremonies of purification among the WaYao which are now rarely performed collectively, though the native, however highly "educated," still goes to the doctor to obtain the necessary medicines for removing, for instance, the contamination caused by contact with a corpse.

These collective ceremonies have already been described by various writers in respect of both Nyasaland and elsewhere;[1] but the Yao rites have not, I think, been given in detail, and the following notes may not, therefore, be altogether valueless.

The *Fyajila* ceremony (*kuyajila*, "to sweep") is common to most Bantu tribes. In its simplest form it used to be performed annually by the WaYao, at the beginning of the twelfth month, most of the months (lunar) being kept by means of a "calendar."[2] The whole village is thoroughly "spring-cleaned," all rubbish

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* At this, where the game is played on old boats' sails in the sanctuary, Father Bernadine Njau tells me, the song in Kiswahili runs:—

Yaeo, yaeo, quando to vengo,
Yaeo, yaeo, hay mato
Yaeo, yaeo, where you come,
Yaeo, yaeo, I shall not be there any more.

Words corrected, presumably, by the hidden fish.

† See Sanderson, M. C., "The Bale Initiation," pp. [illegible], 3 plates. *Annual Report, Nyasaland Antiquarian Ethnology, 1921.*

‡ Pearse, "Notes from Nyasaland," II., 179, 180.

§ A "calendar" consists of a string tied to two pegs in the wall of the house, or between two poles, on which are threaded twelve pieces of reed, bamboo or cornstalk. One of these is moved to the other end of the string each time a new month is seen.

(364) ... the ground round the house is hard clean, and the latrines consolidated. Ceremonial beer is brewed by the head wife of the chief, and after this has been drunk the ashes of the fire used in the brewing are carefully collected and taken to a meeting ("ama-nsolo," or "arranging of paths") where they are deposited.

(365) The chief, as representative of his people, bathes in special medicated water, a decoction made from the bark of ng'ongo and ndoma, and the rest of ng'ongo.

(366) This completes the ordinary annual ceremony, at which new fire is not made.

(367) On certain special occasions a more elaborate ritual is carried out; such occasions are the death of a chief, a threatened epidemic of infectious disease, a murder (especially by shooting) and the frequent occurrence of quarrels in the village.

In such circumstances, in addition to the ordinary purple ceremony described above, the partridge skulls of the whole village are removed and all fires extinguished. The discarded sticks and all ashes of the old fires are carried to the meeting of paths, where the former are stuck upright in the ground and the ashes piled together; this is done in procession, all the people taking part. On their return to the village new fire is made by friction by either the chief or his younger brother—usually the latter, the personnel in any other way would nullify the proceedings. Finally (368) all the people bathe in the medicated water used only by the chief at the ordinary ceremony.

(369) In addition to this special form of the purple ceremony, another rite is sometimes performed after the occurrence of a murder or as prophylactic against the spread of epidemic disease. The doctor first makes a kind of trough (ndongwe) from the bark of mwabwanda or mpoyo, and procures a chadidilo (or chipenguli) basket—used as a strainer in salt-making. Having collected his medicines he proceeds to the bank of the stream near the usual bathing place of the village and digs a shallow hole, in which he places the basket; in this he puts the leaves of a certain thorny shrub and covers the whole with the trough, which is banked up with earth so as to be perfectly firm. He then puts his "medicines" into the trough; these are, first, the head of an iron hammer and a piece of dog, both from a smithing furnace. On top of these he puts pieces of the root of a certain tree which has many and particularly sharp thorns, and bits of bark from two trees peculiar for having very straight stems. Having distributed these evenly along the floor of the trough, he fills it with water and then proceeds to construct an arch over the end of the trough farthest from the stream. Two long poles, cut from a kind of tree particularly rich in sap, are planted in the ground, one on each side of the trough and close to it; these are bent over towards each other, and fastened together by means of a strip of their own bark. A bamboo is now planted alongside each, and similarly tied to its fellow. During all these proceedings and throughout the ceremony it is essential that the doctor has no knots in any part of his clothing.

The preparations are now complete, and when all the fires in the village have been extinguished all people go in procession to the spot where the doctor awaits them. All must be purely clad and must have no metal about them.

(369) The chief opens the ceremony. He steps into the trough and taking some of the medicated water therefrom in his hands he rinses his mouth with it. He then offers a prayer to the spirits of his ancestors, first stating the emergency and (369) reciting the measures which are to be taken to deal with it (new fire, sweeping, discard of partridge sticks and shooting). The prayer over, he splashes the water in the trough over his body and passes through the arch, first throwing some gifts (seeds of, in most modern times, money) into the trough. These gifts, presumably (370) intended as an offering to the spirits, are the perquisite of the doctor, and everybody is supposed to contribute in turn.

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The men and boys now pass through the arch in order of seniority; each splashes 751 ●
himself with the water in the trough, but neither speaks nor rinses the mouth. The 796
women come next, led by the head-wife of the chief; the latter rinses her mouth
and, instructed by the doctor, repeats a prayer similar to that offered by her husband.
The remainder of the women merely splash themselves, like the men, before passing
through the arch. All then return to the village, where the *pyejile* is continued.

Finally the doctor takes the hammer-head from the trough and hands it to
the chief, who rubs the haft into it, and, a hoe having been placed on the ground,
goes through the form of forging the latter by beating it with the hammer. He
then scrapes the ground with the hoe as if clearing a place overgrown with grass;
he does not dig with it as in hoeing up the ground for planting seed. After this
rite the chief again bathes in medicated water similar to that in the trough, and the
ceremony is complete.

Whereas the *pyejile* ceremony and its adjunct, the rite of the arch, are now (178)
but rarely performed, no Yao will omit the rite of purification after a death in his 751
family. This ceremony consists of two essential parts, both protective against 764
the whole, a disease characterized by dropsy and supposed to be contracted by 796
contact with a corpse, or by association, especially by sharing a meal, with those who 783
have been in such contact. The first of these parts is bathing in certain medicines,
which protects the bather from whole, and the second consists of a sort of communion
meal, shared by all friends and especially relatives with those who have been
contaminated, and designed to protect these friends and relatives.

The decoction for bathing is made by soaking the roots of *Lagundendeh* and 751
Sandamde in water, together with the bark of *mbawara*, one piece each from the 783
east and west aspects of the tree; the water assumes a reddish tint, and the whole 824
body is bathed. 765

The communion meal consists of porridge made from any kind of flour in all (362)
use, and some spreads beans. In the latter some scorched and powdered root of
mtandangalala is mixed, with a little salt. All near relatives of the deceased must
partake of this meal, as well as their wives and their near relatives; part is carefully
put aside for the use of any relatives unable to be present at the ceremony.

Lastly, since the spread of Islam among the WaYao, this rite has become (177)
confused with the distribution of food to the poor at the funeral of a Muslim, and (797)
the Arabic word *sadaqa* ("charity") is now generally used for it, to the exclusion
of its wider, correct meaning.

It may be mentioned here that after the death of a child the father is denied 765
access to his wife for a period of about three weeks, and the first act must be one 784
of coitus interruptus.

MERRIAM SANDERSON.